

When Women Get Votes Divorces Will Be Fewer, Says Mrs. F. A. Pattison

"Suffrage Will Establish a Closer Bond of Common Interests Between Husband and Wife," She Declares in Answering Cardinal Gibbons's Assertion.

Marguerite Mooers Marshall.

Cardinal Gibbons declares that to give women equal rights with men will be to increase the number of divorces. Mrs. F. A. Pattison, ex-president of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, asserts that the political enfranchisement of women will do much to abolish the divorce court. Moral: Whatever your stand on divorce, you have no excuse for not supporting suffrage.

But Mrs. Pattison's view of the close correlation between the unhappy wife and the unenfranchised woman has genuine novelty. Therefore I called on her at her beautiful home in Colonia, N. J., to ask her for further explanations. I found a cultured and charming young matron, with that exquisite combination of soft white hair and dark brown eyes and lashes which makes us regret the passing of the be-powdered Colonial belle.

WOND OF COMMON INTERESTS NEEDED.

Yet if Mrs. Pattison's beauty holds reminiscence of an earlier day, her opinions are significantly modern. "I think one of the most important problems we have to face is that of establishing a close bond of common interests between husband and wife," she asserted earnestly. "Gradually they have been pushed further and further apart. In the beginning, in all the earlier stages of civilization, they shared all their work and life. The women were not left at home while the men went out to toil. Wives worked side by side with husbands in the fields or the stone quarries.

"We have got to come back to this community effort between married people. We can't return to the primitive ways and means, but we must work back to the primitive spirit of the closely wrought union. It's the separation of ideals and endeavor which is the opening wedge of unhappiness in marriage. For husband and wife alike there must be the home life and the world life. The home must be the man, just as much as the Government needs the woman.

"Now, there is no bar to a man's taking as much interest as he likes in domestic affairs. He is certainly taking to their importance. I have had proof of this during the years that have been in charge of the Household Department Station established by the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs. I have here on exhibition at the station all the appliances I can secure for the simplifying of housework, for putting the household on a business basis. The number of men among my visitors has been all out of proportion to what you would expect, and their interest has been amazing.

"That part of it is excellent. But why should women be hindered any longer from entering the so-called 'man's world,' the realm of politics? Far from her entrance causing dissension in the home, I believe that it will promote a greater harmony."

HUSBAND AND WIFE COULD TALK POLITICS.

"At least politics would provide a subject of dinner table conversation," I suggested.

"Exactly," smiled Mrs. Pattison. "Husband and wife would be sure of one topic on which they could converse with equal interest. It would never wear out, for it is always capable of fresh developments. A difference in political opinion would be particularly stimulating. There is no reason why such discussion between husband and wife should be any more acrimonious or any less interesting than an argument between two men. No reason, at least, after we have the ballot and can meet our husbands as equals."

"And you don't feel that the possession of equal rights will make women less tolerant and loving in their matrimonial relations?"

"Not in the end, at any rate. The danger is conceivable only if we think of women as static, created by the laws of growth and development. That is certainly not the case. Even in the fifteen or twenty years I can see women have developed wonderfully. And the wider their opportunities of education, both in school and in life after school is finished, the more swiftly their growth will proceed."

"Many of us feel that modern divorce is the accompaniment of a period of transition, not merely a tramping down of standards, but an effort after a higher standard than has hitherto obtained.

"The woman who votes is bound to become bigger and broader minded than the unfranchised woman. Just as the woman who reads is bound to rise superior to the uneducated woman. She will eventually possess the other qualities that go with breadth of mind—generosity, tolerance, quick and intelligent sympathy, self respect.

"My own little idea about suffrage," added Mrs. Pattison, with a roguish look, "is that when men really try to give freedom and equality to women they will be happily surprised to find that it is they themselves who are being set free! We shall stand on our own feet, instead of leaning on our husbands. For the first time they will be freed of our dragging weight.

"If a woman can express her opinion openly at the polls she won't try to force her husband into voting as she wishes. She won't threaten him, as you



MRS. F. A. PATTISON

don't agree with me I'll cry and stamp my foot and make you very uncomfortable. Of her own free will and accord she will release him from his long bondage to pouts and tears.

"Just the truth that everything we eat, wear or use in our homes is affected by politics, that all the factors in the bringing up of our children are somewhere touched by government regulation, goes to prove that the strongest interest touching the lives of both husband and wife is the political one. When the wife is openly allowed to share in it the common bond is bound to be strengthened."

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